Retro #8: Br. Aurelian and the Dairy Farm at SSC

Food rationing during World War II posed few problems for St. Stanislaus College, thanks to the hard work of Br. Aurelian Piton who had earlier helped the school through the Great Depression. Br. Peter Basso, SSC president, supervised students in constructing a new stable with a hayloft for a herd of 15 purebred milk cows, coops for 1,500 chickens, and pens for hogs. So, SSC students had a good supply of milk, eggs, and meat throughout the war. In addition to the dairy farm, the school had 15 acres in cultivated gardens.

After the war, the College got rid of the dairy farm, but Br. Aurelian continued the large vegetable farm until 1950, when a broken leg forced him to limit his efforts. "Chief" as Br. Aurelian was called had enormous strength and energy, often working a 16-hour day. His hard work and good example of humility, frankness, and kindness were noted by the SSC students who dedicated the yearbook to him in 1957. The student dormitory building constructed in 1966 was named Aurelian Hall in memory of Br. Aurelian who ministered for 65 years at SSC.

Brother Aurelian died July 8, 1968, at the age of 83. . He had come to the US as novice in 1903 when the Brothers were expelled from France by a hostile government. He was the last survivor of the 163 French Brothers of the Sacred Heart who had worked in the United States Province, 78 of whom died in this country and were buried here, many of them in the Brothers' cemetery in Bay St. Louis.

For many years, Chief's Cottage, which Br. Aurelian built and lived in, served as a landmark on the SSC campus.

Br. Xavier Werneth, March 2025